

**122<sup>ND</sup> MEETING OF THE NATIONAL CANCER ADVISORY BOARD (NCAB)**  
**MEETING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CANCER CENTERS**

June 11, 2002

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**Welcome/Opening Comments—Dr. Brian Kimes**

Dr. Brian Kimes opened the meeting of the Subcommittee on Cancer Centers by emphasizing the importance of cancer centers in accomplishing NCI's aims of research, outreach, education, and information. He introduced Dr. Linda Weiss as the new Chief of the Cancer Centers Branch, NCI, and applauded the evaluation of the P30 Cancer Center Program and the P50 Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPOREs) by a Working Group as a major strategic step to synergize research efforts.

**NCI P30/P50 Ad Hoc Working Group on Centers**

Dr. Nienhuis called to the attention of Subcommittee participants the Statement of Purpose of the Working Group included in the NCAB notebook. The Working Group is conducted under the aegis of the Subcommittee and, therefore, of the NCAB. A draft roster of Working Group members was also provided.

Dr. Nienhuis reported that the first organizational meeting of the Working Group was held on May 29, 2002. An agenda was decided upon and the primary goal of the Working Group was defined as completing a report for the Subcommittee within 6 months.

Dr. von Eschenbach, who addressed the individuals who participated in the organizational meeting, commented that the Working Group will provide an important platform for translational research. He outlined two types of integrative themes: 1) the synthesis of knowledge from genetic, molecular, and cellular processes into a systems biology viewpoint; and 2) recognition of the dynamics between the tumor and the individual with disease. Dr. von Eschenbach believes that the cancer centers provide the structure upon which these trends toward integration can be fostered. Furthermore, the cancer centers will help establish a new paradigm in accessing cancer treatment: instead of reporting survival as the endpoint, the alteration of biological processes will provide dynamic endpoints that can be assessed in real time.

Dr. von Eschenbach also highlighted the role of the SPOREs program as providing the translational research component. He emphasized the significant success of the cancer centers and SPOREs programs and underscored their central role in the tremendous progress occurring in biomedical research. Dr. von Eschenbach encouraged creative thinking to maximize this endeavor and provide new opportunities. He defined the Working Group as a strategic planning and thinking group.

Dr. Nienhuis reiterated that the Working Group will be looking broadly at the role of cancer centers, the integration of programs with information from basic cancer research, and the reality of bringing to the benefit of the patient population the considerable expansion of cancer research over the last few years. In particular, the SPOREs program, which has been in existence for 10 years, will be assessed as to whether

it is truly functioning as it was originally envisioned. The relationship between centers and SPOREs will be critiqued, and an eye will be cast on the resources that have been invested. Dr. Nienhuis noted that grantees and representatives of the Cancer Center programs as well as representatives of the SPOREs program will appear before the Working Group. Particular attention will be paid to outreach activities. He remarked that interim reports will be provided to the NCAB as the Working Group undertakes its task.

Dr. Weiss provided a handout of proposed guideline changes to the P20 Planning Grants for NCI-Supported Cancer Research Centers and P30 Cancer Center Support Grants and briefly defined the two types of grants sponsored by the Cancer Center Branch. The P20 grant provides support for an institution to explore the feasibility of becoming an NCI-designated cancer center and to successfully apply—in 3 to 5 years—for the second type of grant, a P30 grant. She described the proposed changes for both grants, emphasizing the significant changes to the P20s. She noted that the guidelines should be completed by mid to late summer. Dr. Weiss encouraged input from members of the Subcommittee.

Discussion about small research-focused cancer centers led to the recognition that most large institutions that can be NCI cancer centers have already been designated as such. Therefore, encouraging involvement of the smaller cancer centers would result in the growth of the program and broadening of diversity of the patient populations. Guidelines and grant application reviews will allow for differences between small and large cancer centers, without penalizing the smaller centers.

Dr. Weiss reported that the success rate for conversion from P20 to P30 grants was between 30 and 35 percent. Dr. Kimes pointed out that for P20 planning grants with superior scores the subsequent success rate in obtaining a P30 award was substantially higher. Dr. von Eschenbach underscored the challenge that, because of budget increases to successful grantees, NCI will need to devise ways to bring in small cancer centers while still supporting the large cancer centers. Dr. Weiss concluded by stating that successful P30 grant applications must continue to demonstrate reasonable breadth and depth in three areas: basic biology; clinical science; and population science, cancer prevention, and control. The extramural community is expected to make an effort to interrelate these areas and the standards for success will increase over time.

Brian W. Kimes 6/11/02

Name

Date

Executive Secretary

Cecilia Nienhuis 6/26/02

Name

Date

Chair